

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A DATELESS BARGAIN.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

So the house in Eaton Square once more put on a smart and festive appearance, as became a house whose mistress was about to forget her widow's weeds and don bridal attire.

"Mind," Uncle Archie had said to his sister-in-law, in a voice that recalled a rusty gate creaking on its hinges, "there's to be no wretched parade of wedding finery. The first sign of cake or favours will send me back in a trice to Gloucestershire, and you'll have to find somebody else to give you to the happy man."

So Mrs. Shenstone, after much bemoaning, was forced to content herself with a marriage in a travelling dress, a quiet family luncheon, and a departure immediately after for the nearest railway station en route for Paris.

"No satin slippers, no flowers, no rice, no anything delightful!" she lamented to Joyce, as she kissed her at the hall door; "creeping out of the house for all the world as though we were ashamed of what we were doing!"

"As you very well might be, both of you, at your time of life," grumbled Uncle Archie to himself, as he shut the door on the departing carriage. "Of course it's your own business, and you are each of you old enough to know what you are about; but for the life of me I couldn't say what you can see in each other to take a liking to."

Perhaps the newly-wedded pair might have been driven into a corner with the question.

Possibly Mrs. Shenstone, if she had been

compelled to a truthful answer, would have said: "He is fifteen years older than I, and he calls me 'my child.' The combined facts take at least ten years off my age. Also he will take me the round of all the delightful watering-places and cities in Europe, and I shall return with a semi-foreign air of distinction which will enable me to throw open my doors in London to my friends with increased éclat."

And the old General, had the magic flute compelled his candour, might have answered somewhat as follows:

"I certainly thought her fortune was in her own hands; but still, after all, five hundred a year, added to my own six hundred, won't make a bad income. The daughters are easy-going, generous girls, and will be sure to let the mother have the old home to live in whenever she wants it, and as much of her old income as she requires for life. Also, she won't make a bad sort of companion for a man at my age. One can't get all one wants in this world; I've a horror of strong-minded women and 'ladies intellectual,' and, whatever her faults may be, they won't carry her that way, at any rate."

The old General was right in his estimate of the course of conduct Mab and Joyce meant to pursue towards their mother. They steadily refused to draw any benefit from her second marriage, as from the conditions of their father's will they very well might have done. Joyce was spokeswoman, as usual, and told Uncle Archie of their resolution not to touch one penny of their mother's income.

"If the dear old home in Gloucestershire is to be kept up again, mother will spend her money on it as she did before, no doubt," she said; "and living quietly, as Mab and I do, we have more money than we know what to do with."

Anyone would have endorsed her statement. Living a life of conventual seclusion, with every girlish outlet of enjoyment cut off, she and Mab might have lost one-half their incomes without having to alter their daily routine in any one particular.

After her first little outburst of indignant remonstrance, born of reverence for her father's memory, Joyce did her best to make things sunshiny and smooth for her mother. She threw as much heart as she had to throw into the trousseau and wedding arrangements. All her mother's whims and wishes—and their name was legion—she endeavoured to meet half-way.

"I should like, dear," Mrs. Shenstone had said, "for you to lend me Kathleen for a travelling-maid. She arranges hair so much better than Price—has a better eye for a profile. Also in appearance she accords so much better with a wedding-trip; she is, in fact, exactly the kind of maid a bride should have."

Joyce, though a little surprised at her mother's request, had assented readily enough.

Kathleen of late had fallen out of her favour. To her mind there was a suspicion of underhandedness about the girl, of some strong feeling at work in her mind which for certain reasons she was keeping hidden. She did not believe in her repeated asseverations that she knew nothing whatever of her brother's whereabouts; nor did she think the fact of her disinclination to become Mrs. O'Shea fully accounted for her dejected appearance and frequent red eyes. Mab, it is true, steadily refused to countenance any suspicion concerning the girl, but then Mab's conduct could scarcely be taken as a guide for anyone else's, her Christian charity had of late so far outstripped in growth her common-sense.

"You may have her, mother, and welcome," Joyce had said, in reply to her mother's request; "only, don't let her go out alone, or she'll be sure to get into mischief."

The evening of the wedding-day found Joyce and Uncle Archie sitting in council once more in the library.

"This is the exact state of the case, Joyce," the old gentleman was saying: "gout is coming, coming, as fast as it can; and, unless I can get to Cheltenham, and my old doctor, before it sets in, well—the consequences may be something awful for everybody."

"Oh, Uncle Archie, go to-morrow; why not?" cried Joyce. "I can look after Mab. I am never going to lose sight of

her now, and mean to get in the best doctors in London to see her, one after the other."

"Cheltenham is a famous place for doctors; you have the pick and choice of doctors there," said Uncle Archie, as snappishly as he could make up his mind to speak to Joyce.

After this there followed a brisk argument between uncle and niece, as to the rival merits of London and Cheltenham as health resorts.

Joyce showed a doggedness of purpose to remain where she was, for which Uncle Archie was unprepared.

"I am not young, Uncle Archie," she said, and as she said it, in very truth she felt as though she had seen old Time's wheels go round for half a century at least. "We shall live so quietly; we shall go nowhere; we shall see no one. Some day we'll run down to Cheltenham and spend a month with you, but just now pray leave us alone here to do the best we can for ourselves."

But the real, though unavowed, reason that chained her tight to her London home was the thought, the instinct, the hope—so vague, so half-formed it was not possible to clothe it with words—that here, in the thick of the stirring life, where she had looked her last at her young lover, she would get news of him, living or dead, if ever such news was to be had.

People forget sometimes how useless it is to stand watching the curl of the water where the brave swimmer sank; and how the rocks far out at sea may get tidings of him sooner than the shallow river bed.

CHAPTER XXX.

JOYCE was as good as her word. On the very day after her mother's wedding, that is to say on the day of Uncle Archie's departure for Cheltenham, she set to work to turn herself as nearly as possible into Mab's shadow. It was a difficult part to play, this of a hybrid between a mother and a maid. Joyce set about it with diffidence. The buoyant self-confidence which at one time had carried her so smoothly over contrary currents, was altogether lacking to her now. It had been born of a joyous heart and sunshiny experiences. It died with them. In its place there had come an apprehensive diffidence—that timid touching of stinging nettles which tells the tale of the sharply-stung hand.

It must be admitted that Mab's demeanour was not calculated to inspire confidence. On the morning of Uncle Archie's departure, she came down early as usual, ate her breakfast hurriedly, and prepared to set off as usual for her morning's service.

Joyce demurred to this. "Uncle Archie and Aunt Bell will be starting in an hour or so; can't you give up your service for one day to see the last of them?" she pleaded.

Mab hesitated only a moment. Then she shook her head. "I must, must go to the Abbey to-day—you will understand why later on, Joyce. I will go now and say good-bye to Uncle Archie—it can't make much difference."

Joyce met with a second repulse later on in the day. Uncle Archie had departed. Luncheon laid for two in the big dining-room did not look a cheering or inviting meal. Mab as usual ate next to nothing, and Joyce seized this as an opportunity to introduce the wish of her heart, viz., that Mab should go with her that very afternoon to consult an eminent physician, whom she and Uncle Archie over-night had decided to be the man in London most likely to understand the peculiarities of Mab's condition.

Mab did not give the suggestion a welcome. "I will go to see any physician in London you like, Joyce, if it will make you happy, but I tell you most positively, as I shall tell him, I will take no drugs of any sort. Nor will I follow any directions he may choose to give. My lines are laid down for me."

Joyce, in her amazement, craved an explanation. "What lines, dear, and who has laid them down? You talk in enigmas," she said.

Mab flushed a deep red. "It is of no use my explaining, you couldn't understand, Joyce. By-and-by, when you know more, you will forgive me, I am sure, any pain I may have caused you. Only let me alone now, I beg, I implore."

"Couldn't understand—let you alone," repeated Joyce vaguely, in a voice full of pain, and with a rush of hot tears to her eyes.

Mab grew vehement. "No, you couldn't understand if you tried your hardest from morning till night. Could I understand, do you think, if an angel came down from heaven and talked to me in heaven's language?"

And here she hurriedly pushed away

her plate, quitted the table, and quitted the room.

Joyce left alone, felt as one in an oarless, drifting boat feels sometimes, when he suddenly looks up and measures the space between himself and the receding shore. There were leagues between her and Mab now, not a doubt.

A servant coming in with a telegram made her for the moment bury her heart-ache out of sight.

Her thoughts naturally flew to the travelling bride and bridegroom. Could any ill-adventure have befallen them?

The telegram was dated from Calais, and ran as follows:

"Despatch Price at once to Hôtel Bristol, Paris. Kathleen has disappeared."

Later on in the day, the telegram was supplemented by a letter from the General. Kathleen, it must be stated, had been despatched to Victoria Station with Mrs. Shenstone's huge dress boxes and baskets, there to await her mistress's arrival after the wedding ceremony. The General in his letter stated that they found her there right enough in the midst of the baggage, but that on arriving at Dover, though the baggage had been deposited in the luggage van, Kathleen was nowhere to be seen. They had naturally concluded that she had, through some mischance, lost her train, and expected her arrival by the next. However, up to the departure of the mail packet, there had been no sign of her. In the circumstances, he strongly advised that the authorities at Scotland Yard should be communicated with.

Joyce immediately carried out this suggestion.

"Only, however, for the sake of her father and mother. It cannot possibly concern anyone else," she wrote back to the old General by return post, indignantly resenting what seemed to her an innuendo levelled at Frank behind the words "in the circumstances."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"CAPTAIN BUCKINGHAM wishes to see Miss Shenstone."

This was the announcement that fell upon Joyce's ear, as she and Mab sat together on the day after the news of Kathleen's disappearance had been received. Anger and indignation sent the hot blood in a rush to Joyce's cheeks.

"How dare he?" she cried, jumping up

from her chair and the letter she was writing. "Tell him——"

But Mab interrupted, with a self-assertiveness that sat strangely upon her. "I am Miss Shenstone; Captain Buckingham wishes to see me," she said, with a rush of hot blood to her face, which most assuredly was not caused by indignation.

Then to the servant she added: "Tell Captain Buckingham I will come down at once and see him."

Joyce sprang at her, as the servant closed the door, and folded her hands over her arm.

"Mab, Mab, what is this? what does it all mean?" she cried vehemently. "Tell me; I insist, I must know. How dare this man come to the house in this way, asking to see you? Have you given him any encouragement to do so? Have you seen or spoken to him since Uncle Archie forbade him the house?"

Mab answered calmly enough: "Yes, Joyce, I have seen him many times since, and always by appointment. Sometimes in Mrs. O'Halloran's drawing-room, sometimes in my morning walks."

"Mab!"

"Don't judge me harshly, Joyce. I had, ah! such a strong reason for wishing to see him—a reason which you yourself could not help approving. Our talk has been always of you—your lost happiness, and how to get it back for you. But yesterday——"

"Yesterday!"

"Yesterday he startled me a little by suddenly breaking off from our talk and telling me he loved me, and wanted to marry me. I could not find words to answer him then, so I told him to come here to-day for his answer."

Joyce's reply to this was a cry of pain so bitter, it told of a breaking heart. But she still clutched at Mab's arm.

"Mab, Mab, my darling Mab! it cannot be, it shall not be. You marry a man of that sort! I could hold you against him—against the world! This man shall not drag you away from me!"

In very truth, a doughtier than Captain Buckingham might have essayed in vain to unlock those convulsively clasping fingers!

Mab suddenly took to trembling under their touch.

"Joyce, I will speak out plainly to you. I feel I have only a 'No' to give him—I felt it from the first. I have put away all thoughts of that sort from my mind——"

"All thoughts of what sort?" questioned Joyce, holding Mab tighter as she felt the girl trembling more and more.

"All thoughts of love or marriage. In the life I have set myself to live, one sees the end as soon as the beginning. One has to put away the things of sense to grasp the things of soul——"

But with the last word her voice faltered. She grew heavy in Joyce's arms; her head sank back, her face grew white.

Joyce laid her on the sofa, and rang the bell for the servants. One she despatched for a doctor, two she left with restoratives, bidding them sit by Mab's couch till she came back.

Even a disabled war-horse will fall into step at the sound of the bugle. Joyce went, with head erect, straight to the drawing-room, to meet and dismiss Captain Buckingham.

"It would not take many minutes to do this," she said to herself. A few cold, decisive words, a touch to the bell, a look he should carry away and remember, and the thing would be done.

There was no sign of surprise on Captain Buckingham's bold, handsome face as she entered the room. From the first, when he had made his reckoning of the difficulties which lay between him and Mab Shenstone and her fortune, he had given foremost place among them to Joyce, with her vigorous animosity.

Well and good, he had said to himself; he had his weapons ready to combat alike vigour and animosity. And they were stouter and crueller than those with which, later on, he intended to do battle to Mab's convictions and fancies, so fine in their substance, so intense in their fervour, they might fitly be called religious.

He rose from his chair, but made no attempt at hand-shaking.

"I wish to see Miss Shenstone," he said, with a formal bow.

Joyce returned the bow with equivalent formality.

"I have to decline for her the honour of receiving you now, or at any future time," she said coldly, laying her hand upon the bell to expedite his departure.

This was a rushing into battle without preliminary proclamation with a vengeance.

"I must hear that sentence from her own lips before I accept it," he said loudly, defiantly.

"That you will never do. Captain Buckingham, I must ask you to under-

stand that your visits to my sister, and every attention, small or great, you are wishing to show her, are at once and finally declined by her and by her family."

"That also I must hear from her own lips, or I must decline to accept as final."

"Captain Buckingham, I wish you good morning," and again Joyce's fingers rested on the bell-handle.

He laid his hand on hers. "Don't do that; don't make yourself ridiculous. No one in your house could turn me out if I chose to stay here. I have come this morning expressly to say something to you—to your sister. Say it I will—listen to it you shall."

An electric battery could not have sent the blood coursing at a more rapid rate through her veins.

She drew back a step, though not in fear.

"Shall—will!" she repeated. "Those are not words to be spoken to me—by you."

She was speaking to him; but she was thinking of Frank, and how summary would have been his method of dealing with such impertinence.

Buckingham went on in his loudest and most emphatic manner: "I shall use none others. I repeat, you shall listen to what I have to say, and they are words that will send you down there on the carpet at my feet, praying me to tell you less or to tell you more."

Joyce's hot indignation was swamped now in a dread that chilled her cheeks and lips. His words could point only one way. Her fears had always suggested dark suspicions of this man. His words confirmed her fears.

She strove to command herself, and answered calmly with a question: "Are you referring to Mr. Ledyard? Let me understand what ground we are on."

"Supposing I decline to answer your question, what then?"

Her hot indignation came back to her.

"There are ways of making the unwilling speak. There is law in the land," she cried vehemently.

He laughed contemptuously. "Ah! English law has done so much for you already, no wonder you put your trust in it."

He paused for a reply. Joyce for the moment felt herself suffocating. Words would not come.

He went on:

"Send at once to your favourite detectives at Scotland Yard. Say to them:

'Here is a man who knows the secret you are hunting for.' Shall I tell you what their answer will be?"

Joyce clenched her fingers into the palms of her hand, and held back her words tight between her teeth.

"They will say to you: 'My dear young lady, we know that man, not you. He is not to be believed on his oath. Don't you know that the business of the loud-mouthed democrat is to set the police on false scents from year's end to year's end? That is the chief way in which he serves his cause. Take it for granted he knows no more than you or I do.'"

Joyce, as she listened, could almost have believed the man must have heard Morton's own words to her, when once she had spoken to him as to Buckingham's possible complicity in Frank's disappearance; so faithfully were they reproduced.

"You know I am speaking the truth to you," Buckingham went on, reading easily enough conviction in the girl's face. "Now come to me instead and say to me: 'Give me your secret, it is life or death to me.' Shall I tell you what my reply will be?"

He paused a moment, then dropped into a lower and less defiant key:

"I will say to you: 'My dear Miss Shenstone, on the very day that your sister becomes my wife, I will repay your congratulations with the information you are desirous of.'"

A rush of passionate words came to her lips:

"You—you can lift in a moment this awful load of agony from our hearts, and you are standing here making a bargain out of our necessity?"

"Ay, and a good hard bargain I mean to make of it, too. No shiftiness or double-dealing about it, I assure you."

She drew back a step, wonder, incredulity, bewilderment, all showing in her face. In her most sombre conceptions of villainy she had never pictured such blackness as this.

Buckingham went on: "Don't let us waste time in question and answer. Let us get to the point at once. I want something done that you can do; you want something told that I can tell. In other words, I want you to use your influence with your sister so as to induce her to become my wife, and you want me to give you a piece of information in which you are greatly interested. Very good; let us simply agree to an exchange of favours, and all contention comes to an end."

White and tottering, she crossed the room and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Are you a man, or what are you?" she said in low, unnatural tones, her eyes repeating the question to his, which, bold as they were, for one moment quailed and drooped.

Only for one moment; the next, confidence, and something akin to derision, came back to them.

He laughed lightly.

"Are you insinuating a compliment? Am I to infer that you consider I am exhibiting superhuman devotion and heroism in the very simple and lover-like request I made just now, that you would do your best to bring about a marriage between me and a woman I am devotedly attached to?"

Then he contrived to free himself from the pressure of her hand, which yet rested on his arm, and made one step towards the door, adding:

"But you are disturbed, agitated, this morning, and unable to see things from a common-sense point of view. In a day or two I will call again, and talk this matter out with you. You will then have had time to think it well over."

Joyce sprang forward, putting herself between him and the door.

"No," she said, in the same low, dissonant voice as before; "there shall be no talk of to-morrow. Having said so much, you shall say more. You are bound to!"

"Shall! Bound to! Those are words with a nice sound in them. Suggest the rack, 'peine forte et dure,' and all that sort of thing."

"I repeat, bound," and here her voice grew firmer, louder, though white, whiter her face was getting. "Bound by honour, by conscience, by humanity."

He folded his arms across his chest, and looked down on her.

"Ah!" he said mockingly, "what if I confess that these things—honour, conscience, humanity—are names to me, nothing more?"

Yet as he stood there mocking her agony, an overmastering admiration for this young girl, so bold in her weakness, so defiant with her lack of resources, took possession of him.

Joyce struck her hands together passionately.

"And you, who own this to me, ask me to get Mab to be your wife. I wish I had a thousand tongues, so that every one of them might answer 'no' to you."

He kept his head cool in spite of her passion.

"Then there is no more to be said," he answered calmly. "I will, if you like, consider the thousand tongues have spoken their 'no' to me. I will take it as final so far as you are concerned, but whether I shall take it as final so far as your sister is concerned, is another thing. Now I will bid you the 'good morning' you so politely bade me at the beginning of our interview."

He looked at her as though expecting her to move from her leaning posture against the door.

She did not stir.

"No," she said, her voice dropping into her former low, unnatural tone, "you do not leave this room with your secret untold. There must be a power in heaven or earth that will make you speak out."

He interrupted her with a scornful laugh.

"I should amazingly like to make acquaintance with it. Those who think to drive me into a thing I'm not inclined for, are terribly out in their reckoning."

"Then, Captain Buckingham, I entreat," and here Joyce suddenly left her position at the door, clasped her hands, and stood in front of him. "If you will not be driven, be entreated; I will go down into the very dust at your feet; I will retract every bitter, bad word I have ever said of you; I will beg your pardon for them a thousand times over; I will speak of you to the very end of my life as the one to whom I owe everything, if you will tell me just this, nothing more: is he living or dead?"

There was no need to say who "he" was. Only one man's name was in their thoughts at that moment.

She was trembling from head to foot now; her face ashen white, her eyes glowing. A colder heart than Buckingham's might well have caught her fire and grown yielding.

He made no sign, however.

"Go on. What else would you do?" was all he said.

"What else?" she cried, in a wild whirl of hope that her words had touched his heart. "What one human being could do for another that would I do; my gratitude all my life long would be yours. Ask what you would, I would strive to get it for you."

"Go on."

"How can I go on? What more can I

say?" and now her wild whirl of hope changed to a wild whirl of dread. She made one step nearer to him, caught his hands in hers, clutching them tight in her agony. "Oh, Captain Buckingham!" she cried piteously, "you must have a heart, hide it though you may from all the world. You must have had a mother once who loved you; there must be someone in the whole world who would lay down her life for you. Think—would you have had either tortured inch by inch as you torture me? Have mercy on me! It is only one word I ask of you—a 'yes' or a 'no' to my question: is he dead?"

A marble mask could not have been more impassive than Buckingham's face as he answered:

"And it is only one word I ask of you—a 'yes' to the request I made a moment ago. Speak that word, and you get the answer to your question. Refuse to speak it, and I exercise a similar discretion. There is no more to say."

Then he freed his hands from hers, strode past her, and left the room.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

WEST LOTHIAN, OR LINLITHGOW.

Of all the palaces so fair
Built for the royal dwelling,
In Scotland far beyond compare,
Linlithgow is excelling.

THERE is, indeed, no more interesting ruin in the three kingdoms than that of the palace of the old Scottish Kings at Linlithgow. The site is so sweet and retired; the old burgh that adjoins the ruin is so quaint and old-fashioned; there is such a charming, quiet, and soft melancholy about the place, with its surroundings of green hills and placid lake, and little burns that murmur past the cottage doors; the whole scene is so satisfying and refreshing, and is encompassed by such an atmosphere of old-time memories and wonders, that the stranger tears himself away from the place with regret, while he feels that he carries away with him a better understanding of Scotland's ancient days, and of her old Royal line, than could be attained by long and laborious study.

It seems likely enough that the earliest human settlement at Linlithgow was in the centre of the lake itself—a settlement by that early race not unskilled in the arts of primitive civilisation, who loved to raise

their dwellings in the midst of waters, working like beavers, with piles and wattled embankments. The surface of the lake was, probably, higher in those distant ages, and the mound on which the palace is built was then, probably, an island. A rude stone causeway would connect the island with the main land; and this, in the eyes of the Celtic settlers, who, sooner or later, appeared upon the scene, would form its most remarkable feature. The lake to them would be Llynlechog, or the Pool of the Causeway; and thus, with trifling adaptations to the heavier articulation of Saxon tongues, the name has come down to our own times.

The encompassing waters had shrunk, no doubt, to the dimensions of a shallow moat, when the troubles of the Scottish succession brought the first English Edward to the spot. The English King, too, seems to have found the place pleasant and taking, for he spent a whole winter here, and built a castle on the site, making it "a Pele mekill and stark." The Royal park about the margin of the lake is still called The Peel, and from the pleasant terrace by the margin of the waters you may see the massive foundations of the great castle-builder's fortress, upon which is reared the graceful entrance portal of later times.

The old Edwardian Castle had its adventures in the days of The Bruce. Once it was taken by the Scotch, by means of that well-worn stratagem of war, in the form of a hay-cart stuffed with armed men, which was manœuvred so as to stick fast in the portal arch, and prevent the portcullis from descending, while men in ambush joined in the unexpected rush of warriors from beneath the hay, and carried the fortress by a coup de main. But the Castle was in English hands again in Edward the Third's reign, and some time after was gutted by a great fire, which destroyed also the nave of the ancient church. The Stuarts, pleased with the gentle beauties of the site, set to work to build a palace out of the blackened ruins. Bit by bit the work went on, the new structure following the lines of the inner bail of the old Castle, till the present quadrangular building was completed, with lofty turrets at each angle, and massive walls that defied any sudden attack. But, while offering a stern and blank exterior to dangers from without, the inner façade of the quadrangle was, and still is, even in its ruin, of noble and graceful aspect, enriched with mulioned windows, and graceful oriels look-

ing down upon the velvet turf, while carvings in rich relief, heraldic devices, niches, statues, attest the taste and skill of the sculptors and masons, Italian and French, who reared this stately pleasure-house.

The western side of the quadrangle—the most ancient part of the present building—contains the apartments: a handsome reception-room, with a finely-wrought open fire-place, and a smaller inner chamber, where Mary Stuart made her first appearance in the world, in a moment of trouble and sorrow—her father dying lonely and despairing in Falkland; her mother's bed surrounded by vindictive and angry Nobles. From her birth, the poor babe was bought and sold, doubly bought and sold, and the agents of the rival purchasers hovered about her cradle.

The babe, who had become Queen of Scotland by her father's death a few days after her birth, narrowly escaped being carried off to England, to be brought up as an English Princess. Henry the Eighth meant to have her as a wife for his own infant son. The great Nobles of Scotland were bribed to acquiescence in the scheme; but first there was a doubt in the mind of the English Ambassador as to whether the babe were worth all the trouble. Report had it that the child was weakly, and little likely to live. But the Queen-mother herself set him right upon this point, introducing him into the Royal nursery and showing him the little innocent. "As goodly a child as I have seen of her age," reports the staid Sir Ralph Sadler, as the result of his diplomatic perquisition.

But the wonderful finesse and adroitness of the mother—a true daughter of the House of Guise—frustrated the plan. She convinced the Envoy that, far from being opposed to the English influence, there was nothing she would prefer, both for herself and her babe, than to be sheltered under the wing of the powerful and generous Monarch. And, while thus temporising with the English Court, her friends and the friends of France took means to arouse the national feeling on the matter; which proved so strong and fierce against the English alliance, that everything gave way before it. Ere long a national force encompassed the walls of Linlithgow, and the Queen-mother and the Royal babe were escorted, in its midst, to the impregnable Castle of Stirling. And then, in due time, the little Queen of Scots was delivered to the rival purchaser, and the

child was sent to France, to be brought up in a Court which was one of the worst possible schools for any of the virtues, or even the decencies, of the feminine character.

With Mary of Guise as Regent, the palace of Linlithgow was always a favourite residence. It had been her husband's gift to her. When the Royal marriage had been celebrated in Fife and Stirling, James the Fifth brought his bride to Linlithgow, when she exclaimed that she had never seen a more princely palace. The fine east wing had then all the gloss of newness upon it, and its stately corridors and noble halls were all brilliantly illuminated, and thronged with the beauty and chivalry of the realm in all the bravery of that brilliant and sumptuous age. What a contrast now, as the night dew settles upon the blackened walls, and the stars shine through the gaping vaults of the roofless dwelling! Then all was feasting and enjoyment, the cavernous kitchens lit up with huge fires, and, as at Camacho's wedding, the very skimming of the pots was a handsome meal for squire or man-at-arms. Now the hundred hearths are all cold, and the corbies build and croak about the shattered chimney shafts.

But there was something beside feasting and merry-making when the royal pair kept their Christmas at Linlithgow. At the Epiphany of 1540, David Lindsay's dramatic apologue of the Three Estates was represented before the King and Queen and the ladies of the Court, and, no doubt, a jolly laughing audience from the neighbouring Royal burgh. There was plenty of buffoonery of the coarsest to set the groundlings in a roar, with satire, and a good deal of plain speaking to make tingle the ears of Prelates and Cardinals, of Lawyers and Nobles, and even of Royalty itself.

The King's bed-chamber is still pointed out in the north-west corner of the Palace of Linlithgow; the pleasantest and most cheerful of all, with an outlook upon the silvery lake and the green hills, and softly undulated landscape by the only windows that are allowed to pierce the massive outer wall. But not the lofty walls and iron-bound gates, nor the guards who kept watch in the antechamber, nor the warders who patrolled the battlements over his head, could protect the Monarch's couch from nightly fears. The pale forms of the victims of his ruthless and yet timid policy appeared before his distempered vision. Had the King possessed a more robust character, he might have regretted that he

had done so little with axe and gallows; that he had only cut down the humble weeds, and had left the towering growth of rank herbage. The latest of his victims, the fierce Sir James Hamilton, appeared before him in a vision, all bleeding from the scaffold, and holding in his hand the executioner's dripping sword. "Cruel tyrant," cried the shade, "thou hast unjustly murdered me, who was indeed barbarous to other men, but always faithful and true to thee; wherefore now shalt thou have thy deserved punishment." Upon this the apparition seemed to cut off first one arm of the King and then another, and promised to return ere long and finish the business. The death of the King's two sons shortly after, and on the same day, seemed to be a fulfilment of the ghostly warning, and the King ere long himself died, broken-hearted, in the shame and grief of his last unhappy days.

It will be remembered also that Linlithgow was the scene of another supernatural warning, which the King's father, James the Fourth, had received on the eve of his departure for Flodden Field. The scene of the warning was the Church of Linlithgow, a fine old building, which is separated from the Palace by only a strip of emerald turf.

The church is still in excellent preservation; the nave, which was burnt with the old castle in the fifteenth century, but soon after rebuilt on the old foundations, is now walled off from the chancel, where the service of the national kirk is conducted, the nave itself being utilised as a Sunday-school. The actual scene of James's warning is the south transept, where at that time was an altar consecrated to St. Katharine. The transept still remains very little altered, except that the shrine is broken and the painted glass no longer adorns the florid tracery of the east window. We may now follow the lines of Sir Walter Scott, who has given the incident in the fourth canto of *Marmion*, as he found it in the old chronicles of Pitscottie and Buchanan; an incident perfectly authenticated, and as well established by the evidence of eye-witnesses as any fact in Scottish history:

In Katharine's aisle the monarch knelt,
With sackcloth shirt and iron belt,
And eyes with sorrow streaming.

The Monarch's penitence was for his father's death at Sauchieburn, with his own share in that event; and the iron belt which he wore night and day was part of

his scheme of expiation, as were the masses which were continually being sung or said for the repose of his father's soul. At one of these masses the King was now assisting,

While for his Royal father's soul
The chanters sung, the bells did toll,
The Bishop mass was saying.

In the midst of the service, while the King was kneeling at his desk, engrossed with his devotions, a strange interruption occurred:

Stepped from the crowd a ghostly wight,
In azure gown with cincture white,
His forehead bald, his head was bare,
Down hung at length his yellow hair.

The mysterious figure, in fact, corresponds with received notions as to the aspect of the loved Apostle John. And there was a precedent for the appearance of such an august messenger from the other world. It was St. John who had sent warning to Edward the Confessor of his approaching end—the tradition is recounted in the *Chronicles of Shropshire*—and what more natural than his appearance to him who might claim to be the lineal representative of the old line of Saxon Kings? In the character of St. John, at all events, and as the adopted son of the Virgin Mary, the visitant addressed the King as equal to equal:

My mother sent me from afar,
Sir King, to warn thee not to war,
Woe waits on thine array;
If war thou wilt, of woman fair,
Her witching wiles and wanton snare,
James Stuart, doubly warned, beware.

The apparition, having delivered his message, disappeared among the assembled and wondering throng.

Now, if we may hazard a guess, this mysterious visitant was no other than the Queen Margaret herself. The long yellow hair seems to lead that way, as well as the feminine postscript to the heavenly message. And depend upon it, that James, startled at the first onset, recognised the identity of his celestial visitant, and hid a cynic smile behind his illumined missal. Queen Margaret was just of the bold and gusty temperament to have carried out such a freak, and the assumption of the character of St. John was probably due to her knowledge of the tradition above alluded to, which is especially connected with Ludlow, where her brother Arthur had once held a kind of viceregal Court.

If this be the correct interpretation of the vision, the easy evasion of the messenger in the midst of the Royal suite, and

the King's neglect of the warning, are both accounted for. The Palace of Linlithgow was Margaret's own especial home.

The Queen sits lone in Lithgow pile,
And weeps the weary day.

Tradition points out a lofty look-out tower that rises above the battlements of the Palace as Queen Margaret's Bower, and represents the Queen as watching there, in lonely and anxious care, the return of her lord the King from the war; watching and weeping in vain, till mud-stained and dejected horsemen brought the dread news of Flodden, of the death of the King, and the slaughter of the flower of the land.

There was plenty of coming and going at Linlithgow as long as Mary of Lorraine was Regent for her infant daughter. Here she might well feel at home, for Lothian, in name as well as in natural features, is just another Lorraine. Here she met a Parliament that assembled in the great hall that still bears the name of Parliament Hall; and in the same place was held a Convocation of the clergy, Archbishops, Bishops, prelates of various degree, in all the pomp and circumstance of the old ritual so soon to be swept away.

Seven years after came three of the hardest-faced men in Scotland—Argyle, James Stewart (afterwards known as the Regent Murray), and John Knox himself—on a mission to reform the religious houses—the Carmelites, who had occupied a friary in the town since the end of the thirteenth century; the Knights of St. John, whose town house at Linlithgow is said to be still existing in the form of an old square tower near the railway station.

Henceforth there were few bright days at the old Palace. Mary Stuart herself does not seem to have loved the place; it was too sad, perhaps, with its memories of a parent she had hardly known. James the Sixth took the Palace in hand, and rebuilt the north side of the quadrangle; but his visits were few and far between, and from that time Linlithgow was abandoned to quietude and gloom—a kind of enchanted palace that was waiting for its Prince to set everything going again.

A hundred years had passed away, and the stillness was yet unbroken. The Commonwealth had come and gone. The swans on the lake, it is said—real Royal swans—had flown away when Cromwell's soldiers made their appearance, and had only returned—joyously splashing and bathing—at the Restoration. William the

Silent had passed into eternal silence. Queen Anne was dead, as everybody knew. The Hanoverian Georges had come and had remained; none of that family was likely to make an abode of Linlithgow, of which perhaps the Royal family had never heard. And then in the fulness of time the Prince arrived—the real Prince Charming—the beautiful young Prince at whose touch everything in the Palace came to life again.

A noble young Prince he was, this Charles Edward, when, with all the halo of victory about him, he came to spend a night at the old Palace of his ancestors. The keeper of the Palace was then a Mrs. Glen Gordon, a Jacobite dame, who did her best to give an air of festivity and Royal splendour to the scene. The old fountain was set running—so the story goes—with wine: the old broken fountain, now all choked with ferns and weeds. Had she discovered—this worthy scion of the good old stock—had she found treasure in the mouldy old cellars—old Bordeaux, with the yellow seal stamped with the Royal signet, or haply a pipe of Canary that had mellowed since the days of Queen Mary? Or perhaps, after all, she filled the marble basin with her own home-made gooseberry and red-currant wine. In the evening there was a grand reception, to which all came who dared; a baillie of the town was there, it is said, but most of the burghers read aright the signs of the times, and stopped away.

But, from the old mansions and manors round about, ancient carriages came lumbering along, old finery was furnished up, and wrinkled dames, and soft blushing maidens, and veterans in tarnished gold lace thronged the courtyard of the Palace, and mingled with Highland chiefs and kilted clansmen. Then the old windows shone forth once more in soft radiance after a hundred years of darkness. All was to begin again, and go on as things had gone in the old time.

But Linlithgow had to pay for this moment of illusion. A few months after the visit of the Prince, King George's men came marching through the town. A thousand of them were quartered in the Palace. It was in the bitter winter weather—the floors were covered with straw, great fires were built in the great cavernous hearths, and the soldiers made merry among the old tattered hangings and the scattered lumber of old furniture. Hawley's Dragoons, who had fled so shamefully before the enemy

not long before, were now in possession of the banqueting hall in the north wing, that James the Sixth had built. Dame Gordon had stuck to her post, and made the best she could of her rough guests. But when morning came, and trumpets sounded boot and saddle, Madam was horrified to see that the bold dragoons were amusing themselves by shovelling up the fire from the huge hearth and throwing it upon the thickly-piled straw.

The Gordon ran to General Hawley, to beg his interference to save the Palace. The General hemmed and hawed. Well, after all, it was not his business to protect a place which had sheltered such a traitorous rogue as the Pretender.

"Then, General," said the stout dame, losing no time in vain recrimination, "I'll just follow your example and rin awa'."

And presently the flames burst through the roof and windows, and ere long the whole stately pile was a smoking ruin.

And yet so solid and excellent was the building that, except for its roofless, forlorn condition, it stands as of old, perfect and complete, with staircases, turrets, and battlements practicable for the explorer, and with walls holding out valiantly against the stress of wind and weather. And to the eyes of most, the whole appears much more picturesque and noble as a ruin than it could have done as an inhabited building, and is besides much more accessible than palaces generally are. And with this we may find our way through the gateway leading to the town, once only subsidiary—the back door to the Palace as it were—the principal entrance being through a handsome gateway, at a point where the Red Lion Inn now stands, and so by a noble sweep through the park, and then by a bridge adorned with sculptures and statues, to the grand portal—the entrance this for Princes, Ambassadors, and the great Lords of the Realm. But even the smaller gateway has a fine appearance, with its cable mouldings, its oval meurtrières, its guard-chambers, and deep groovings for the massive portcullis. And so

Adew Lithgow, whose palace of pleasure,
Micht be ane pattern in Portugall or France.

The town of Linlithgow is ancient and interesting, if, like the olden parts of Edinburgh, also rather dingy. And yet there is a quaint attractiveness in the long and narrow High Street, with tall, dark houses which may once have been

inhabited by the nobility, but which have sadly fallen from their high estate. The place has quite a foreign air with its fountains.

Glasgow for bells,
Lithgow for wells,

says an old adage, and Linlithgow still keeps up its reputation. There is a fine fountain by the Town Hall, a reproduction of one described by Sibbald, in the seventeenth century, as "A curious fountain raising the water a full spear's height, which falleth down in several pipes with a pleasant murmuring." There is no pleasant murmuring now, for the fountain is as dry and dusty as you please; but there are others that are actually going concerns, and one bears the legend "St. Michael is kind to strangers." For the rest the place has the reputation of having seen better days, and it seems to have flourished exceedingly during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, having, although an inland town, a considerable shipping trade through its port of Borrowstounness, a name in practice mercifully shortened to Bo'ness. At Blackness, too, in the memory of Sir Robert Sibbald, "There were some thirty-six ships belonging to the country which traded with Holland, Bremen, Hamburg, Queensburgh, and Dantzic, and furnished the west country with goods they imported, and were loaded outwards with the product of our own country." Nor was this all, for, "besides the commerce by sea, they have manufactures of leather, of dyers, of thread makers."

Of all the industries that brought prosperity to the town, only the tanning of leather now survives, a craft which Linlithgow is said to owe to Cromwell's soldiers, but which may have been introduced by refugees from France.

The great event at Linlithgow was the assassination of the Regent Murray from a house in the High Street, which unfortunately no longer exists. And when we read of the crowds that assembled in the High Street, and that impeded the Regent's progress so that he could only ride at a foot pace past a house that he knew was an enemy's—when we try to realise that crowd, the changes that time has made are brought home to us. Perhaps the nearest approach to such a bustle in Linlithgow in modern times, was in the present year of grace, when the Provost and baillies presented the freedom of the old burgh to Lord Rose-

bery, and with the burgess ticket a copy of Waldie's "History of Linlithgow," in which work, by the way, much will be found of interest relating to the Palace of the Stuarts.

We have already heard, in connection with the town, of the Knights of St. John, who owned many of the principal houses, and whose Preceptory was some five miles to the south, at Torphichen. There are existing fragments of the Church of the Hospitallers, incorporated in the parish kirk of Torphichen, and a fragment of the ancient Preceptory adjoins the more modern house of the lords of the fee. Malcolm the Fourth settled the Knights of St. John in the kingdom; the Preceptor was appointed by the Grand Master at Rhodes or Malta; but the King for the time being was consulted as to the choice of such a powerful chief. Among the more notable of the Grand Masters was Sir William Knolles, from Rhodes, Councillor and Treasurer to James the Fourth, one of the chief abettors of the son against the father, and who shared the fate of the King on Flodden Field. To him succeeded Sir Walter Lindesay, whose name crops up at times in the chronicles of the period. Sir James Sandilands was the last of the Preceptors, who by paying "ten thousand crowns of the sun" to Queen Mary, obtained a grant of the Preceptory in feu ferm, and thus secured the lordship for himself and his descendants. There are Temple lands up and down in Angus and Fife, ancient possessions of the Knights Templars, which the Johnians came in for, and these lands still pay quit-rent to the Preceptory of Torphichen.

Torphichen lies among the hills, which have strange names thereabouts—Cochleureuf and Arncath, names that had a meaning once that is now, perhaps, illegible. From their summits all the country round about is visible in panoramic fashion: the Forth from its rise among the hills to its issue, with the Isle of May and the Bass Rock as salient points; and between the two extremes Stirling Castle rises proudly from its rock, and the Links of Forth twine in innumerable folds, and the Carse are spread out in all their verdure.

Along the Firth is here and there a small port or anchorage, such as Blackness, with some remains of an old castle, once held by the Douglas, and that otherwise has a little history attached to it, relating to the time when Queen Mary was a prisoner in England, and not a rood of

Scottish ground acknowledged her sway, save the rock of Edinburgh, held by Kirkcaldy of Grange and a devoted garrison. This was in the year 1573, when Kirkcaldy was expecting a goodly sum of money from France, a windfall in the way of arrears of the Queen's dower, which was to be devoted to her cause; and to secure the safe landing of the specie a detachment of the Castle garrison was marched to Blackness and occupied the Castle. Presently Sir James—the brother of the laird of Grange—sailed into the Forth with the treasure, fifty thousand double ducats, from the French Mint.

But, in the meantime, the little garrison at Blackness had been got at by James Balfour, described by a contemporary as the most corrupt man of the age, and once a companion with John Knox at the French galleys. Thus, when the adventurer landed he found himself a prisoner, but dexterously making use of his ducats, he brought the garrison to a sense of their duty and held the fort for Queen Mary, hoping for speedy assistance from his brother of Grange. But the younger Kirkcaldy had a wife, who, in her husband's absence, had become a favourite of the Regent Morton. The wife was despatched to entice her husband from his stronghold; he walked with her along the shore, and was seized by a party of men in ambush. With its chief, the fort, and the ducats it contained, fell into the power of the enemy. Sir James was made a prisoner, of course, and was likely to receive but little mercy; he contrived to escape, however, and on the following morning, the night after her treachery, his wife was found strangled in her chamber. Not long after, the garrison of the Castle of Edinburgh compelled Kirkcaldy to surrender, and then Sir James was again made prisoner, and with his brother suffered in the Grass Market, at the command of the vindictive Regent.

And now we may take our leave of Lothian, which still retains traces of its former individuality as a distinct principality; first pausing, however, to "speer" into the cause of its division. Here Sibbald comes to the rescue. "Because of the jurisdiction," he explains, "it came to be divided into three districts: the Constabulary of Haddington, the Sheriffdom of Edinburgh, and the Sheriffdom of Linlithgow, which formerly did comprehend Stirlingshire likewise, but now containeth only West Lothian."

THE ROSARY.

I HAVE strung them on a golden string,
Those dated days of ours;
Like diamond stars is their glittering,
Their perfume like summer flowers;
And when I sit in the dusk alone,
When the long "day's darg" is over and done,
I take my Rosary from its nest,
Hidden warmly away in my breast,
And tell my beads with a lingering touch,
My beads that recall and mean so much,
And live again through each little thing
Of the past and its precious dowers;
Through the tears and the smiles that ever cling
Around our sweetest past hours.

I gathered them softly, one by one,
From Memory's border-land.
Some lay full in the noonday sun,
And some nestled deep in sand;
Some were o'ergrown by the verdant turf;
And some lay tumbled amid the surf,
That chafes for ever upon the shore,
Where Time is breathing, "No more, no more."
And some were set so hard in frost,
That Hope shrank from them as something lost;
But Love smiled down from his stand,
And watched till my task was done,
As I strung them with soft and tender hand,
The treasures my search had won.

Oh, cruel time and tide may do
Full many a bitter deed,
Since all that we may plead and rue,
Cannot check or change their speed;
Much we may dream of, much we may trust,
Will fade, like the rose of a day, to dust;
The hope we cherished may sigh and part;
The reed we leant on may pierce the heart;
But nothing can dim the tender shine
Clinging about these jewels of mine;
And never in vain, for me or for you,
Can Memory's magic plead,
For pure and rounded, and rich and true,
Is every threaded bead!

SEALSKIN, AND WHERE IT COMES FROM.

IN FOUR PARTS. PART II.

BEFORE describing the fur seal it will be well to notice its much better known relative, the hair seal, with which it has often been confounded.

The hair seal about the Pribylows is comparatively scarce, and differs notably from its congeners in shape and habit. It seldom comes out of the water for more than a few rods at most, but prefers the edge of the surf, and especially small isolated rocks just jutting out of the water, where it can lie and be continually washed. It is not polygamous, like the fur seal, and is never seen in larger numbers than twenty or twenty-five together. Its cylindrical, supine, grey-and-white body forms a great contrast to the erect, long, black or ochre-coloured *Callorhinus*. The pups when born are quite white, and weigh three to seven pounds; they grow rapidly, and at the end

of four or five months turn the scale at fifty pounds, assuming by this time a soft steel-grey coat, with back mottled and barred lengthwise by dark brown and blackish streaks, melting imperceptibly into the grey of the body. Next spring this bright grey has turned to a dingy ochre and the mottling spread well over the head and down the back, fading, however, as it gets towards the tail. There is no appreciable fur or down, and the skin is, as we have said, valueless except for leather. The animal is sought, however, for its oil, which is inferior—if inferior at all—only to sperm. As we know, though sparsely distributed in the North Pacific, it forms the great bulk of the animal life of the North Atlantic; and its capture gives employment to a host of vessels and men off the mouth of the St. Lawrence in March and April, when the creatures are netted. When disturbed, their mode of progress on land is very distinct from that of the fur seal. They make off by a simultaneous reach of both front flippers, pulling the hinder parts after them. Their progress is thus six inches or a foot each time. When swimming, all the work is done by the hind flippers of the *Phoca*, while the *Otariidæ* use the fore flippers.

Now for the *Callorhinus*. Let us take him as he comes out of the sea, in the prime of life and strength, seven years old. He measures six-and-a-half to seven feet in length, from the tip of the nose to the end of what we must call the tail, but which is in reality the merest apology for that appendage, being only about four inches long. He will average five hundred pounds in weight, and is in the prime, fattest condition that an animal can possibly be in, creased and wrinkled on the breast and neck with loads of blubber, for what purpose we shall soon see. He swims three feet or so out of the water, and holds his head high and erect, small in proportion to his huge neck and shoulders, and furnished with a pair of big, soft, bright, hazel blue eyes. He has muzzle and jaws similar in size and form to those of a good Newfoundland dog, with this difference—that the lips are not flabby and overhanging; they are as firmly lined and pressed together as our own. The upper lip bears a yellowish white and grey moustache, composed of long, stiff bristles, and when it has not been broken, or torn out in combat, it sweeps down and over the shoulders as a luxuriant plume.

As he lands, we can see that he raises himself by alternate reaches of the fore flipper, then, arching his back, he lifts up the hind extremities and brings them under the body, thus getting leverage for another forward movement. This is the regular mode when going leisurely; but when disturbed or frightened, he quickens his motion, and gallops so as to take a man all he can do to head him back. Thirty or forty yards, however, of this is quite enough; he then sinks exhausted and breathless.

The bulls begin to arrive, one by one, as soon as the snow has gone—say from the 1st to the 5th May—but the great body comes up from the sea later in the month, and by the 10th to the 12th of June every station is mapped out and occupied. The rule is naturally, first come, first served; the one who actually lands first has the right of pre-emption, chooses his ground of course nearest the water, and he is allowed to keep it—on this condition, however, that he can hold it. Here, as in all earliest known states, the law of the strongest is in full force—might makes right. To covet his neighbour's goods seems to be the first duty of the male seal, and to get at them he spares no trouble. His hand is against every seal, and every seal's hand against him. Consequently, every bull in possession has to be prepared against all comers. Fighting, therefore, is continuous and never-ending; it goes on morning, noon, and night somewhere in the colony, without a moment's cessation, and the row is indescribable. It may be heard above the roar of the surf, and several miles out at sea, where it really serves as a signal to the mariner that he is approaching St. Paul or St. George. Of course the territories are continually changing owners. A bull who arrived early, and has kept his ground say for a month, may at any moment be dispossessed by a stronger, or at any rate a fresher arrival from the sea; and this change is never-ending, up to the 8th or the 10th of July, when all the cows have arrived, and things have really got shaken down into working order. During this period, of nearly three months, incredible as it may appear, the bulls never desert their grounds for an instant, even to eat or drink, and forty winks are the very utmost that can be allowed them for sleep. It will be at once asked, how in the world they live. They live by the absorption of their own fat, a curious provision of nature not unknown to physiologists. Nothing can

well be more different from the fat, bulky creature we have seen arrive than the same creature at the end of the season, when he slinks into the sea, haggard, ragged, and torn, to come up again next spring as fresh as paint.

The bulls are all at least seven years old, for that is the earliest age at which they take upon themselves the responsibility of paternity. Their coat is a dark dull brown, with a sprinkling of lighter brown black; the very old bulls being noticeable by their grizzly grey coats. This, then, is the colour of the over hair, underneath which lies the fur, the distinctive mark of this species. The hair and fur exactly correspond to the feathers and down on a duck's breast.

The males have four distinct notes, differing in this from the hair seal, which is voiceless, or nearly so; from the sealion, which has a deep roar; or from the walrus, which grunts. The fur seal has a loud, long, resonant roar, a low gurgling growl, a whistle impossible to communicate, as it must be heard to be appreciated, and a sort of spitting cough, exactly like the puff-puff of a locomotive starting a heavy load. The cows have only one note—a long, hollow baa, strangely like that of an old sheep; and the pups baa just like lambs. So like, in fact, that during the summer of 1873, a lot of sheep brought up from San Francisco were thoroughly disturbed in their intellects, and kept running in and out of the seals to the neglect of their own pasture, and a small boy had to be engaged to herd them to their proper feeding-ground.

But everything comes to an end if you give it time enough. Between the 12th and the 14th of June, the first of the cows appear at the edge of the water, and they continue to come up till the 10th to the 14th of July, when the arrivals cease. As they come to land they are coaxed and urged by the nearest bulls, who never have the slightest hesitation in adding force to persuasion, taking the cow by the scruff of the neck, just as a cat will a kitten, and depositing her in his territory.

Let us look at the colony just as it appears at this period. A shingly beach slopes down to the sea, varying from four hundred to six thousand feet of sea margin, and forty to one hundred and fifty feet back. All over are placed the bulls, as regularly as a chess-board. Imagine the scene. A bull in the front rank has just landed a cow, but, seeing another in the

water, he abandons his first love, and devotes himself to number two. As soon, then, as his back is turned, the bull immediately behind him stretches out and seizes upon cow number one, whereupon he is immediately set upon by the three bulls next to him, and there is a grand fight for a minute or two, during which the lady either crawls or is carried further back still, possibly to the very last row, where she is, perhaps, allowed to stop.

The female is, in every respect, a contrast to her lord and master. She is four to four-and-a-half feet long, and much more shapely; there is none of that unsightly folding of the blubber on the neck and breast. The shape never seems to alter, for, unlike the bulls, they come and go frequently, and leave their maternal duties—which indeed press very lightly on them—to sport in the water and to feed for considerable periods. When dried, after emerging from the sea, the cow glistens in steel grey; but after exposure to the weather, this changes to a dull ochre below and brown and grey above, and this colour is retained till they change their coats in August. In manners she is the very opposite to the male; she is amiability itself, never quarrels or gets angry, and hardly even utters a sound when she has two bulls hold of her, each hauling a different way. They vary much in size amongst each other, whilst the difference in the weight of the sexes is striking. Two were weighed, and found to be, one fifty-six, the other one hundred pounds, both being in normal good condition: so that we may say that the female is one sixth of the male.

The female comes up, excited by the maternal instinct, and the pup is born sometimes a few hours, but usually a day or so after landing. The pup gets fed at long and irregular intervals, sometimes even a couple of days; but the treatment evidently agrees with it, for, while at birth it weighs three to four pounds and is twelve to fourteen inches long, in four months it has become twice as long and ten times the weight. As soon as the pup is born it opens its eyes, begins to paddle aimlessly and to baa; thereupon mamma looks down anxiously, sees a fresh object, begins to give it attention, and then, a happy thought striking her, begins to suckle it; after which, if the spirit moves her, she pops into the water and amuses herself to the best of her ability, it may be close in shore, or it may be miles and miles away. On landing

again she has no difficulty in recognising her own property, for, although the pups appear not to know their own mothers, the mothers recognise their offspring by the voice. This is the only explanation of the fact that each pup gets nursed by its own parent, out of perhaps ten thousand other pups. Suppose mamma has been away a couple of days, and comes back to where she left her pup. Young Hopeful is no longer there; he is the soul of sociability, and has got mixed up with a cluster of other youngsters. She, therefore, sings out exactly like a sheep, and the pup answers just like a lamb, hearing which, mamma straightway makes for the spot, knocking everything right and left. Perhaps the pup is asleep; if so, he does not reply, and mamma, after a few more calls, adapts herself to the situation, and goes to sleep too. Remember that this is one instance only out of hundreds of thousands exactly alike, and the noise may be imagined. There seems to be little or no exhibition of that maternal affection which we see in our cats and dogs. There is no play between mother and child; but the little ones amongst themselves carry on just like kittens and puppies, and have grand romps, nor does the habit leave them till they are seven years old.

When the young seal is about a month old, its education begins. One may wonder wherein this consists, and this feeling will be intensified when we learn that it consists in teaching the young to swim. It seems paradoxical—one can hardly believe it—that the finest swimmer of all amphibious creatures, which spends half its existence at sea, has no more idea of swimming at first than one of our own babies. But it is the fact. Take a pup and put it out of its depth, and straightway its bullet head sinks, its hind parts flop about impotently, and its death by suffocation is the question of a few minutes only, the little creature not having the least idea of lifting up its head and getting the air.

Such being the case, its education is a question of some little time, and is thus effected. At about six weeks old his instinct takes him down to the water's edge, where he paddles about all day long, now washed by the surf and now left high and dry, in another moment perhaps to be rolled over and over by the water. After a few minutes of this he gets tired, curls himself round like a cat or dog on the hearth-rug and goes to sleep, but only for a short

time, for the seal at all ages is the most restless of living creatures. Then again to the surf, paddling about just like our own little boys and girls, every day expanding his ideas, and proving to himself that water is not such a dreadful thing after all. By repeated efforts, then, he learns to keep himself afloat, to recognise his own powers, and become thoroughly master of the element in which he has to spend the greater portion of his life.

Once at home in it, he has a fine time—he and his brethren swarm all over the coast; and when we know that St. Paul's alone has sixteen and a half miles of seal ground, which at this time is covered by seals of all ages, one may get a faint idea of their number.

By the 15th of September all born in that year have become familiar with the water, have learned to swim and congregate by the water's edge. Now they begin to take their second coat, shedding the black pup hair completely. Their new dress does not vary in colour at this age between the sexes; the change is effected very slowly, and cannot be said to be completed until about the 20th of October. This sea-going jacket is a uniform dense light grey over-hair, with an under-fur sometimes greyish, but generally of soft light brown. The over-hair is fine, close, and elastic, nearly an inch long, while the fur is half this length. Thus the coarser hair completely overshadows and conceals the soft under-wool, and gives the colour by which, after the second year, the sexes are recognised.

So far we have proceeded with the life history of the fur seal. We can now leave him to do for himself. It is now the 20th of September; he has learnt to swim and make himself thoroughly at home in the water. The rookeries are now broken up, all order and regularity is at an end; confused, straggling bands of females are seen amongst pups, and squads of old males crossing and recrossing the ground in a listless, aimless way. The season is now over. Many of the seals do not leave St. Paul and St. George before the end of December; some wait even till the 12th of January, but by the end of October or beginning of November all the fur seals of mature age—five and six years—have departed. The younger males go with them; many of the pups still loaf about the land, but seem to prefer, as a rule, the rocky sea margin. But by the end of November these have all gone; the islands settle down for six months' quiet, and winter sets in with its usual severity.

Where do they go to? Certainly not northwards, for it is well known that not a single seal is to be found north of the Pribylovs, and the floating ice of winter prevents any congregation of amphibious life. There is then the southwards, the enormous expanse of sea south of the Aleutian Chain, five thousand miles of water between Japan and Oregon, swarming with the natural food of the seal—fish. They can have no resting-place, or it would be known; they must therefore spend all their time afloat, seeing that they sleep at sea just as comfortably as, or perhaps more so than on land. They lie on their backs, fold the fore flippers across the breast, turn the hind ones up and over, so that the tips rest on their necks and chins, thus exposing only the nose and the heels of the hind flippers above water, nothing else being seen. Here is no poetical fancy, but a prosaic fact, "rocked in the cradle of the deep."

One cannot but think of the enormous quantity of fish they must get through. The common seal, such as we see in our aquaria, has evidently a most voracious appetite, and never seems able to get as much as he can do with. Consider then the weight that must be consumed in the year by the fur seal, several times its size, roaming about under thoroughly natural conditions in its natural element, instead of being cooped up within the four walls of a tank.

As a matter of fact, the hosts of the fur seal produce a notable scarcity of fish around the Pribylovs. It is perfectly hopeless to throw a line over the gunwale of a boat. You must go out at least seven or eight miles, and then you can get nothing but very large halibut. Practically, the sea for a hundred miles round is cleared of fish. It is computed that forty pounds per day is rather a starvation allowance for an adult male, twelve pounds to a female, and not much, if any, less for the fast-growing pups. Allow an average of ten pounds per individual per day, and calculate what four or five millions would consume every year—only seven million tons or so. Why, all the fishing of the world is but a drop in the bucket compared with this. We must remember, too, that the seal is only one of the creatures which prey on fish. I can well believe what is asserted by many well-informed people, that the supply of sea-fish is inexhaustible by any means known to man.

FANCY PIGEONS.

If you enter London by any branch of the Great Eastern Railway you are not likely to form a high opinion of the Imperial city. The prospect is distinctly ugly; narrow streets, with little houses all painfully alike, the oldest dating from that time—the beginning of the century—when England's architectural energy (like her purse) was almost used up by the long war. Of course there are stately houses in Stepney, and even round Ratcliff Cross novelists tell you of them; explorers come upon them after much search along broad, garish, unsentimental "Roads." They are red brick, which weathers well; whereas the pale, yellow London brick—used also, alas! in some suburbs of Dublin—is of all building stuff the vilest. When new it makes a street look as if it had the jaundice; and in a few years it gets smirched and grimy, while the smoke-acids act as a rapid solvent on its ill-tempered constitution.

The New York tenement system has its evils, very grievous ones; so has the Continental system of flats; also the plan—seen in Soho and in the central parts of Dublin—of turning once stately mansions into human rabbit-warrens. But the "every-man-his-own-house" plan has its drawbacks too. It condemns a whole district to ugly monotony, unbroken save by the flaunting "public," for the shops are of the meanest; showing, indeed, a variety which would tax the quick glance of a Houdin, but a variety unredeemed by a trace of beauty or artistic arrangement. What "culture" can come of seeing in street after street the pitiful mixture of tapes, red herrings, boys' tops, onions, Dutch dolls, blacking, lollipop bottles, envelopes, and lucifer matches? The wide roads have their stuccoed buildings, and they have the charm of many "small industries." They are so wide that a policeman thinks it needful to order the seller of automaton mice, beetles that dance at the end of a bit of elastic, penny scales, ditto gridirons and toasting-forks—not to speak of fruit and fried fish—to "move on." Here I saw the Italian and her fortune-telling birds. You dropped your penny or halfpenny into a box, and straightway one of the little creatures picked out for you your fate from a whole trayful of neatly rolled up mottoes. Poor woman! not long after she changed

her ground to the wastes of ill-made brick and untempered mortar north of King's Cross; and there, not having the wide road between her and harm, she was crushed by a falling house.

As you look from the Great Eastern Railway through the maze of telegraph wires into the dingy back-yards, you cannot help noticing how many people keep pigeons. There are the birds flitting about, some of them common-place enough, but some which, if you have a fancier's eye, will tempt you to wish you could fly out of the carriage window and have a chat, perhaps a deal, with the owner. And they do not come from a distance, attracted by the morsels to be picked up, for there—sometimes in half-a-dozen houses together—are the quaint substitutes for dovecots. Pigeons are tolerably independent of the laws of health. Mr. Ure tells of a most successful fancier, a Dundee cobbler, who kept his birds under his bed. You smelt them the moment you put your nose into his stall; and I, who believe in the close connection between pure air and temperance and the reverse, am not astonished that the "souter body" came to grief through drink, and had to sell all his birds but one, a splendid cock fantail, with which, as solace for his wanderings, he tramped all the way to Glasgow in search of work.

Some of our East-enders keep their pigeons in even queerer places; others rig up an old box on the garden side of their house (such gardens they are!), and in these little streets may be seen tumblers of all kinds, magpies, bluebeards, bald-heads; fantails, the handsomest of all on a housetop—even the lace-fantails, with their singularly expressive faces; barbs, trumpeters, pouters, nuns; while boys, seemingly not much raised above the street Arab, may be heard learnedly discussing the relative merits of short and long faces, and what swallows, and rollers, and dragoons, and turbits, are like, and whether the new Jacobin with his hog mane is really an improvement on the maneless bird now nearly extinct. You are at once puzzled to know how the breeds are kept distinct. Nokes goes in for pouters; his neighbour, Styles, for fantails; three doors off is a breed of "ground" or "house" tumblers—a kind which never go aloft. They turn their somersaults so low down that sometimes one of them strikes its head and kills itself, as the rollers occasionally do. Further on are

some big trumpeters, with thickly-feathered legs, and the rose well over their eyes, nobly mottled black and tan—together, one could think, as irresistible to little Miss Fantail as a tall Guardsman is to a diminutive nursemaid. I suppose, despite the doves' well-known fidelity, there must be a good deal of cross breeding. There must be a good deal of give and take, too, in the way of food. Pigeons in the country have a proverbial fondness for the peas in fields not belonging to their owners. Those who are always finding fault with the dark ages, tell us that is why the dovecot, in England and France, still so often shows where the manor-house stood. The seigneur, lord of the manor, would not let anyone else in the parish have a pigeon-house; and he always took care to have one himself, because it cost him nothing. His pigeons sallied out and fed on the farmers' crops, just as his men-at-arms went out to forage for fowls and sheep when their lord's larder was low. In the Nile valley, the ne-plus-ultra of oppression is to deprive a "fella" of the right of pigeon-keeping; the consequence is, that everybody's birds prey on him, and he sometimes finds his crops miserably reduced, without having any means of retaliating. How they manage in Stepney and Spitalfields, I don't know; but they do manage to breed birds of which neither Baily of London, nor Siddons of Birmingham, nor the new lights at Plymouth, nor such other worthies as Ridpath of Manchester, would despise. How do they do it? What subtle connection is there between bird-fancying and general grubbiness? Why should a dingy street in Seven Dials be a veritable birdcage walk? And why should the most thickly-peopled slums in Norwich furnish our choicest canaries? They say it all comes from the Huguenots. That revoking the Edict of Nantes did as much, according to some people, for Western Europe as the dispersion at Babel did for the world at large. Anyhow, the Spitalfields weavers have for generations been renowned for pigeon-fancying, and the weavers were originally a French Protestant colony. In Norwich, again, there were several immigrations—of Dutch, during Alva's persecutions; of French, when Louis the Fourteenth's serious concern about his soul led him to drive out his best and most industrious subjects.

To get on well with birds needs a special aptitude; almost all country-bred children try to rear linnets or thrushes, yet how few succeed. They do not fail in tenderness;

even some are not wanting in patience; but still the little things will not eat. I never knew but one, a Somersetshire girl, who was thoroughly successful as a dry nurse to young birds. She would take them, as my boys brought them, almost from the egg, and scarcely ever failed. But then she would get up at all hours to feed them, and she never forgot that they have enormous appetites and very quick digestions. She was repaid for her pains by their affection when they grew up. The birds used to walk up her arm, sit on her shoulder, and never think of going off further than the corner of the table-cloth.

That was much harder work than pigeon-breeding, and the result from a fancier's point of view was nil. Why pigeons are so attractive is that, of all stock, they are the most variable. That is why Mr. Darwin chose them to illustrate his theory of selection. Sports, reversion to ancestral type, etc., occur among them more often than they do among horses, sheep, or cattle. Their rapid breeding-time, too, enables you to watch, and weed out, and establish a variety much more quickly than the cattle-breeder can.

Then, pigeons cost less than pedigree cattle, even at the extravagant prices that are now given for fancy birds. So that, instead of one, you can have fifty selections of what best suits your purpose, each doing what Mr. Darwin contends that Nature does in the long run. The Darwinian principle needs no proof as far as varieties are concerned—certain surroundings, certain food, careful selection give you the varieties you want. Pouters—which in their full development are so hopelessly unlike the original blue-rock dove, with its long thin neck, that you think they must be another species—are bred by taking the shortest-necked, fullest-cropped pigeons of your flock, breeding from that pair; and then from those of the children in whom the parental peculiarity is most developed; and so on. Never mind how prettily marked the others may be, what soft eyes they have, what expressive faces, and feathered legs. Your object is pouters, and so you must sell or kill off all that do not pout so decidedly as to show that what was at first only a "sport" is getting into the blood.

That is how man manages it—for pigeons or dogs, or sheep—and the process is easy enough, and quick enough for a scientist to watch it while his book is awaiting its second edition. Every now and then comes

out, in the most carefully bred stock, something that is not a pouter, or a carrier, or whatever the breed may be, but a blue-rock dove, or something very like it. The breed may have begun in the far East—the fantail is undoubtedly an Indian variety—and have been “improved,” getting close-feathered to stand the climate, amid the fogs of Holland.

The “owls” shown some thirty years ago at the Crystal Palace were labelled “Booz pigeons from Tunis.” “African owls,” they are still commonly called, though the best, with their grand frill, come to us by way of Germany. It may—like the trumpeter, that splendid fellow, who looks so proud if you give him fair play, i.e. provide him with a “walk” of sand, so that he may not soil his feathers—have passed through years of adaptation to a northern climate in Russia. But in every case there will be now and then “reversion to original type”—a more or less decided case of common blue-rock pigeon, which of course you will weed out at once, but which proves that all these strange distortions as some call them—“these splendid varieties,” in the language of the fancier—from that fine old breed the “Archangel,” to the newest American peak-headed fantail, are descended from one original stock.

Now, the question of questions is—Can what is so patently true of varieties be extended to species? At present, species very seldom interbreed, at least, fruitfully, but even among some pigeons—fantails and pouters, for instance—it is very hard to get a cross.

Is it possible that, in the course of ages, what originally were only varieties can have lost the reproductive power? A pouter is more unlike a high-bred carrier, a Shetland pony is more unlike a barb, a turnspit is more unlike a greyhound, than a leopard is unlike a panther, or an African is unlike an Indian elephant. Yet these are different species, the others only varieties. Can it be that these have only lost, through long subjection to different environment, a reproductive power which they originally possessed? That is how Nature does it, by subjecting the creatures to a certain environment; those whom that does not suit die off, the others survive, and accommodate themselves to it more and more.

In some small, windy islands the beetles are wingless, or slightly equipped in that respect. Why? Because those that are born stronger in the wing are ambitious, and in their flights are pretty sure to be

blown out to sea, leaving the race to be continued by those necessarily condemned to sedentariness. We may extend the principle to human beings; Nature is continually weeding out the weak, in spite of medical science, which, many think, keeps alive; in countries like ours, a vast number who never ought to have grown up. But human beings are swayed by a host of considerations quite apart from what Nature means by fitness. The Spartans, indeed, used to select those whom they deemed the fittest by the summary process of flinging the newborn “unfit” into the caverns of Mount Taygetus; and they tried to ensure a good breed, mentally and physically, in ways which are a still greater outrage on our feelings than the cavern business. But among other nations the wish to found or to perpetuate a family outweighs all other considerations. Very rarely would a millionaire bid his only son refrain from marriage, though he knew that son to have in him the seeds of constitutional disease. He would trust, and we cannot condemn him for so doing, seeing that care and diet work such wonders, to good bringing up (i.e. environment) to get rid of the bad germs. Here adoption, the method of the modern Hindoo, as it was of the old Roman, might advantageously come in. How have Rajput families been kept up since before Moses’s day? By adopting a kinsman, if there was no son, or only a weakly one. The elder Scipio’s son and heir, Scipio Nasica, was a weakling. “He had very poor health, or rather, no health at all,” says Cicero. What did he do? Look out for an exceptionally buxom bride and take his chance? No; the family prestige was too precious to be committed to chance. His father had won a splendid name in the long struggle with Carthage; his son must finish that father’s work. So he looked round, and, finding that the best all round among rising young men was an Æmilius, he adopted him. Certain religious rites made the adopted son bone of his new father’s bone, and blood of his blood; he took to his family gods, and gave up his own. And thus the future conqueror of Carthage became Scipio Æmilianus, reckoned among the former, but preserving in his second name the memory of his origin. The slow progress of man during the Middle Ages; the apparent falling back every now and then, the general coarseness, are explained from the fact that the gentle, the pure-minded, the noble-hearted, the men and women of broad and intelligent

views and wide sympathies, very generally took to the cloister, leaving the race to be perpetuated by those who were their opposites.

But, revenons à nos—pigeons. May we assume that because, confessedly, all pigeons are from one primal stock, as is proved by an unmistakeable mark of the unimproved original cropping up every now and then, therefore (the time being indefinitely increased) the whole race of cats, from the royal Bengal and the African lion downwards, have developed from an ancestor no longer existing, even as the horse is said to have done, link by link, from the “hipparion”? And, if so, how is it there is no instance of reversion? Why don't we sometimes find, among many litters of kittens, one more or less like what we may suppose the common ancestor of all the cat kind to have been? Well, to this last objection, at any rate, the answer is clear.

Reversion in cats, and tigers, and lions is nowadays very slight indeed, because the selection, and consequent development, has been natural; among pigeons and sheep it is artificial, and is kept up artificially. “In the beginning,” when, we are told, species were as much in a state of flux as varieties of pigeons are now, it was because they had not found their fittest surroundings, but were, as Mr. Grant Allen poetically puts it, striving after them and getting modified in the process. In plain prose, those which could not suit themselves to the surroundings died out, and the breed was perpetuated by those who could. When any breed had found what suited it, the modifying process ceased. Egyptian cats are almost exactly like our own, though we find pictures and mummies of them nearly four thousand years old.

Pussy had grown to be what she has since remained, because the cats that were born with slightly different constitutions and habits, either died out, or gradually developed into something else. Cats, for instance, are “arboreal”; but a mane would interfere with climbing trees as much as Absalom's hair did with his safe passage under them. Therefore, any kittens born with manes would be likely to die out—to be caught, and their eyes pecked out by crows—or would have to migrate to treeless countries, and develop habits which in æons on æons might turn them into lions. How it might have been with the Egyptian cat had it continued to be used—as it was

in very early times—as a retriever and water-dog,—who knows? It might have become web-footed. Unhappily, the experiment was cut short; for, when the Egyptians began to mix with other nations, they took to retrieving with dogs instead of cats, and pussy's fine taste for fish is nowadays seldom joined with a love of getting her feet wet.

Australian rabbits, again, have not yet changed their shape—they climb trees, have “forms” like hares, swim rivers, and otherwise comport themselves in very unrabbit-like style. Well, the geologists and others must settle, if they can, the matter as to species. As to pigeons, the case is clear; it is only by perpetual care that these highly-developed modifications can be kept up. And what care must have been taken with the carrier, for instance! Most pigeons have the “homing” tendency pretty strong; but in them it is irresistible, and seems to need no gradual training from short to long flights. Keep a good homing Antwerp shut up for twelve or eighteen months, and when you let it out it will be off in a “bee-line” to its old home. Hence their value in war; one remembers them in the siege of Paris, how they took and brought news—if they escaped the Prussian rifles—written on thin strong paper (pelure d'oignon), and rolled up in a quill. They used to be kept at Arbroath, to give the Bell Rock lighthouse men a chance of sending messages in rough weather. Unfortunately, just when the sea is impassable the air is full of storm, and the birds used to get so often lost that the plan was given up.

Clearly it is not in stormy weather that your pigeon will go from London to Brussels in less than five hours, making the distance between London and Dover in some twenty minutes. That is a triumph of breeding and training too, and full of practical use; and yet fanciers are wrong-headed enough to talk of “the homer-pest.” In many pigeons—horsemen, dragoons, etc.—the homing is unusually strong, and from these, by patience continued through many generations, carriers have been brought to what they are; just as the cropper has been developed into the pouter. It is to be remembered that the so-called “carrier” is not the homing pigeon, but is bred for quite other qualities.

I began with the East End; but let no one think that, therefore, pigeons are unfashionable. Look at the prices that good

exhibition birds bring. Great numbers of people in all grades of society keep pigeons for show or pleasure. I prefer the latter. I advise fanciers not to bow their knee to the Baal of shows, and to beware of fanciers' tricks in making up birds. They have not yet got to the length of the street artisan, whose goldfinch the disappointed buyer found to be a painted sparrow; but they have come pretty near him.

LOST IN THE VALLEY.

By the Author of "Driven of the Wind," etc.

A STORY IN SIXTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER XIII.

"It was through Madame Ravelli I first learned to whom that letter was written," Maurice went on presently. "She quoted a part of it yesterday, but she did not know, and does not know, that it is in my possession."

"I can quite understand the spirit in which she wrote," said Eveline, without a trace of bitterness in her voice, "and it is hopeless to expect her ever to believe me. One thing, however, I was able to do. While in London I called on her lawyer, and directed that a few hundreds should be paid to Madame Ravelli annually, and that he should state that the money came from relatives in Italy, who wished to have their names suppressed. More I cannot do, for they will not let me. I have told all I have to tell now, Maurice; do you believe me?"

"Yes," he answered quietly, "I do believe you, Eveline. But I think you have been very, very much to blame. First, by allowing yourself to be associated with, and duped by, such a man as your husband must have been; next, by permitting Tito to be always with you, by which you tacitly encouraged his love; and lastly, by not taking up the matter at once after your husband's death, and proving with the evidence of Dr. Grantley, Mrs. Symonds, and your stepfather's will, that the stories circulated against you were false."

"How could I?" she asked. "Proofs will not stop slander, even if they be forthcoming. Mrs. Symonds had left Italy before I even knew of Tito's death. My husband's family had never approved of his marriage,

and they naturally upheld his memory at the expense of my good name. I know I have been altogether weak and foolish, but surely I have been punished enough all these years in being haunted with such memories, and pursued by such hatred. When I found that the world shunned me, I shunned the world. You know how quiet my life has been. I never thought of marrying again; I wished for no future; I only wanted to forget the past, to live down slander by a blameless life. When I met you—it was your voice that first attracted me, the sweetness of it seemed to soothe me. I thought you were a boy, and the chivalrous deference of your manner was something so new to me, that I grew to look forward to your visits as the one cheering event of my day. Then, when I found you were risking your life for me, I was in despair; and when you told me that you loved me, it was such a great and unexpected happiness that I could not repulse you. The very absence of passion about your affection for me has made me love you better than I have ever loved anyone before, for violent emotions awaken no response in me but terror. I was always afraid of my husband; I have never been afraid of you—afraid only lest by hearing of my miserable life, you might judge me as most of the rest of the world have done, and no longer love me. Of course I know that this is an end of everything, and that your parents will never think of allowing you to marry a woman against whom such terrible charges have been brought, even if you yourself still wished to. But at least let me hear you say that you do not altogether hate me too."

She slipped down on her knees by his side, and laid her hand on his shoulder while the tears rolled slowly down her fair face.

He turned and looked at her; her voice, her eyes, her touch, did more even than her words towards softening his judgement of her.

Without a word he gently clasped his arms round her, and laid her head against his heart.

Even at this moment he knew quite well that, had he known all this story before, although he believed in Eveline's version of it, he would never have told her he loved her, never have asked her to be his wife. But he had gone too far now to draw back, and his mind at that moment was filled with a strength of affection, half passionate, half pitiful, of which neither

he nor anyone else would have thought him capable.

For a few seconds they remained thus, she weeping silently against his shoulder, until a knock at the door brought them both back to a sense of things prosaic, and Eveline rose to her feet as Hélène entered the room with a letter.

"For me, Hélène?" she asked.

"No, Madame, it has just been left for M. Wilde."

It was from de Villars.

Maurice recognised the writing before he opened it, and at sight of it he remembered that Eveline had not yet explained to him her intimacy with this man.

The Marquis had not wasted words in this note to his rival; but what he said was none the less to the point.

"M. WILDE,—Ask the lady whom you are going to make your wife, with whom she was having supper the night before she knew you were to fight a duel in defence of her good name. Should she decline to inform you, I can refer you to M. de Montmorillon, or to half-a-dozen of my other club friends, who can swear that it was at my house, in company with them, a few charming ladies like herself, and your humble servant,

"HENRI DE VILLARS."

Maurice read the letter through, in hot indignation at first; but, looking up, he saw that Eveline also had recognised the handwriting, and was watching him as he read it with her head bent forward and a look of fear in her eyes.

He handed her the letter without speaking.

"Is this true?" he asked as she finished reading it.

"Yes," she faltered, "it is true, Maurice, but I can explain——"

"Stop!" he said sternly, "I have no doubt you can explain this as you explained the rest, but I require no further explanations. I am perfectly satisfied."

And, without another look at her, he left the room.

His first thought, when he reached his own apartments, was that Eveline would follow him and entreat him to listen to some plausible excuse which, uttered in that melodious voice, would force him again, against his better judgment, to believe her. To ensure himself against such a contingency he called Bénédict, and directed her to refuse admittance to every-

one. "To everyone, Bénédict, you understand. No one is to come in to-night," he repeated.

But no one tried to do so; and in two hours' time—during which he pretended to eat some dinner and to read a newspaper, he found that, from being indignant at the idea of her intrusion, and anxious to protect himself against it, he began to listen keenly for the sound of someone ringing at the entrance door, and to feel a pang of absolute disappointment as the hours went by and no one came.

He excused this weakness to himself, by saying that he was curious to know what palliation a woman would dare to suggest for such conduct as hers. Knowing that he was to meet de Villars the next morning, she had absolutely gone to a supper-party at his house, among the fastest men and women in Paris. She had owned to it. What could she possibly say to justify such a proceeding? It was the more inexplicable when he remembered her contemptuous treatment of de Villars when he had concealed himself in her sitting-room the evening before.

But Maurice suddenly recollected that Eveline knew he was in the adjoining room and could hear what passed.

"She wanted to keep us both, the rich and the poor one, I suppose," he said to himself bitterly.

She had never alluded to de Villars in her explanations; never properly accounted for her tolerance of his society. And the moment she thought Maurice was safe in England, the Marquis had evidently been recalled.

Yet the O'Haras, Dr. Grantley, Miss McIntyre, they believed in her, called her an angel of goodness and charity. But then he remembered that the O'Haras were enthusiastic, prejudiced Irishwomen, who did not, after all, see very much of their fascinating friend, and that Miss McIntyre's devotion was no doubt partly due to Eveline's charity. For she was charitable; yes, but lavishness in spending ill-acquired wealth, was a quality not by any means associated with the worthiest women.

And Dr. Grantley, no doubt, was the English doctor whom Madame Ravelli had spoken of as the Countess's lover. Miss O'Hara had said he was in love with her, and the highest praise the Doctor himself could find to bestow on Mrs. Douglas, was that "she was more sinned against than sinning."

Maurice rose and paced up and down his room in miserable agitation.

He would not see her, would not let her deceive him again. Yet he looked now eagerly at his watch to see if it was yet impossibly late for a few words with her to-night.

He found it was past midnight. In his excited state he had not noticed the flight of time. He went to bed; but could not sleep. He would cross back to England the following night, he decided, and would see Eveline once more first—just for curiosity's sake, to hear what she could say.

So, between ten and eleven the next morning, he rang the bell on the floor below and, when Pierre opened the door, asked for Madame Douglas.

"Madame left last night, Monsieur. If Monsieur will but wait, she left a little note for him."

Maurice mechanically followed the man into the salon. As Pierre opened the door of the inner room to fetch Eveline's letter, her little white kitten crept out, and rubbed itself against the young Englishman's feet. He took it up and caressed it while he waited.

When Pierre returned he brought with him a tiny packet, which he laid in Maurice's hands. Without opening it he could feel that it contained a ring, and guessed that it was the one he had given her. The room seemed to be swimming round him and a dimness to obscure his sight. But he felt that the man-servant was watching him, so he would not open the packet now; and only asked, "where is Hélène?"

"She has gone with Madame, Monsieur."

"Do you know where they have gone and when they will return?"

"Ah, Monsieur! no," the man replied with a markedly mysterious manner. "I only know that Madame informed me that she might be absent a month, six months, even a year. I was to remain until I heard from her again, and the other servants also. But Madame will doubtless have said more in the note Monsieur is holding."

"Thank you," said Maurice, moving towards the door. On the threshold he paused, as an idea suddenly flashed into his mind.

"Did Madame Douglas go alone? I mean, alone with Hélène?" he asked slowly.

Pierre hesitated before answering. At last he said:

"No, Monsieur, not alone. She had a gentleman with her. Indeed, he came to

fetch her on receipt of a note which Madame despatched to him."

"Who was it?" asked Maurice, almost in a whisper.

"Ah, Monsieur! it is not for a servant to recognise visitors."

Maurice could see that the man required bribing. It was a contemptible thing to have to do; but at any cost he felt he must know the name of Eveline's companion.

"Try and remember now," he said, placing a sovereign in the man's hand.

"Merci, Monsieur! But one's memory comes and goes indeed."

"Who was it?" Maurice repeated.

"Monsieur, it was assuredly M. the Marquis de Villars."

A greyish pallor overspread the face of his questioner; but he mastered himself even now sufficiently to thank Pierre for his information in a tone which, but for his sudden change of colour, would have suggested entire indifference on the subject of the Countess's travelling companion.

Then he quietly returned to his own rooms. It was not until he reached them that he discovered he had Eveline's white kitten still clinging to his sleeve. He burst into a dreary little laugh at the sight of it.

"So she has deserted you as she has deserted me?" he said. "Well, it serves us both right for pinning our faith on a woman."

The packet Pierre had delivered to him contained no word of farewell, of affection, or of explanation; only the ring he had given her.

The shock of her departure was an unexpected one, for all his doubts so far had been but half doubts; and he had come down this morning ready and willing to listen, to believe, and to forgive.

In these first moments all his love for her seemed dead, and he himself incapable of feeling anything further than an intense longing to get away from this noisy, unfeeling town to his own people and his home among the quiet Malvern Hills, there to forget this month of love, of excitement, and of sorrow.

So, quickly and carefully repacking his things and choosing his train as if nothing but the most every-day occurrence had taken place, he left Paris; and it was not until several hours later, as he stood on deck and watched the shores of France receding from his view, that the full reality of his position came upon him for the first time; and he knew that, much as he

might love his home and his family, he was leaving his heart, his trust, and his youth behind him with Eveline Douglas.

At luncheon-time next day he arrived at The Grange, and found his father, mother, and sisters at table with their two guests. Greeting them all as if nothing had happened, he quietly took his place there, knowing that every eye was watching him, every ear on the alert for some explanation. But when Ethel commented on the fact that he looked "dreadfully old and ill," he only said that the three journeys had tired him, and he wanted rest and quiet.

"We are going to lose our friends, Maurice," said Mary, to change the subject. "Madame Ravelli has had such a piece of good news from her lawyer in London."

"Yes, indeed!" said the Italian lady; "a relation of mine, who wishes to remain unknown, has provided me with a sufficient sum to enable me to return to my native land, and live there in at least moderate comfort, for the future. So I hope to travel to Italy with Jeanne in a very few days' time."

The blood rushed to Maurice's face. He knew well whose generosity had so provided for the maintenance of an enemy.

"I congratulate you," was all he said.

Jeanne did not seem pleased at all. She had, indeed, been carrying on a brisk flirtation in broken English with a cousin of Miss Dudley's, and the prospect of retiring to widowed dreariness in Italy with her mother-in-law was far from inviting to her.

They were to leave in three days.

Mrs. Ravelli heaped dignified benedictions on the heads of the Wildes for their hospitality and kindness, rather after the manner of an exiled monarch bestowing gracious blessings upon loyal subjects.

The sound of her voice was hateful to Maurice, so, as soon as he could after luncheon, he retired to his little study upstairs, and opening the window, leaned out in the frosty air to cool his aching head.

As he stood thus, Mrs. Wilde came softly in behind him, and laid her hands upon his shoulders.

"My poor boy," she said, "how wickedly you have been treated! Tell me all about it. Did you see that dreadful woman?"

Maurice shivered.

"Listen, mother," he said, closing the

window and standing with his back to it, the worn, tired look on his face shown up pitilessly in the clear, wintry sunshine. "I have come home, and I want to stop here. But if you or the others ever mention Eveline's name before me, either to praise or blame her, or to ask me questions about her, I shall have to go away and live among strangers, who cannot torment me about her. I loved her, and I—I thought she loved me. I can't help thinking so even now," he added, more to himself than to her, with a sudden break in his voice. "But to hear her discussed by anyone is more than I can bear. I know I am troublesome, and morbid, and selfish, but as you are fond of me, and want me to stay with you, you will humour me in this, will you not, and you will tell the others what I have said, too?"

She kissed him and promised. Then she went downstairs to make up for her self-restraint by talking the whole thing out very fully with her husband and daughters. They had all, of course, done nothing else since they heard Madame Ravelli's story, and found that its heroine was Maurice's fiancée. Madame Ravelli's dislike to Eveline was, however, so virulent that she sometimes went a little too far in her diatribes on the subject, describing her as a creature of such superhuman depravity that the more intelligent of her auditors began to doubt her statements altogether.

At last, to Maurice's intense relief, Madame Ravelli left them, to make the final arrangements for her journey in London.

Jeanne went to pass the intervening days with her friend Miss Dudley, and made such good use of her time that when, a few days later, she left for Rome with her mother-in-law, she was engaged to be married to young Dudley, and it was arranged that, as soon as the elder lady was settled comfortably in the town where she meant to end her days, little Jeanne's English admirer was to go out to them, marry her there, and bring her back with him to England.

"If only Eveline could know!" was Maurice's first reflection when he heard the news. "If only anyone could tell her!"

For, try as he would to persuade himself that she was cold and heartless, he knew it would give unmixed joy to her gentle nature to hear of her enemies' welfare.